

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

8 July 1957

STAFF MEMORANDUM NO. 38-57

SUBJECT: Probable Developments in the Cyprus Controversy

1. Present Situation. The future status of the British Crown Colony of Cyprus remains obscure. Although there have in recent months been some changes in the positions of the parties directly concerned -- the UK, Greece, and Turkey -- there is little indication that they can reconcile their differences in the near future. The release of Archbishop Makarios, the Greek Cypriot spiritual and political leader, from detention in the Seychelle Islands in March has added to the confusion, since his views and those of the present Greek Government do not coincide at all points. As for the British, there are indications that they may be reconsidering the status of Cyprus and its military value in the light of their current reappraisal of the UK's strategic requirements in the Middle East and Africa. Meanwhile, Turkish displeasure with the first moves of NATO Secretary General Spaak in seeking a solution to the Cyprus impasse has resulted in increasing bitterness between Greece and Turkey. The Greeks have stated that they have no alternative to reraising the Cyprus issue during the regular session of the UN General Assembly, which convenes in September.

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2. Alternative Solutions. None of the various alternative solutions -- continued British rule, enosis, partition, or independence with treaty guarantees or under a UN trusteeship -- commands the support of more than two of the three major parties, not to mention the desires of the Cypriots themselves.

(a) Continued British Rule. In the past the Turks have been willing to see an indefinite continuation of British administration of the colony. However, British officials, notably Governor Harding, have recently expressed the view that continued British rule cannot be continued for more than about two years in view of the increasing politico-military liabilities for the UK.

(b) Enosis. The Greek demand has consistently been for enosis (union with Greece), which it was confidently felt would result if self-determination were granted to the islanders. In recent months, however, there have been some indications that the Greek Government, and possibly Archbishop Makarios, might compromise at least to the extent of an extended transition phase in which the island would be granted independence under a treaty guarantee or a UN trusteeship.

(c) Partition. The Turks argue, at least for tactical reasons, that partition ("integral self-determination") is a practical proposition, a view shared by some British official opinion. Even if an economic union could be preserved, however, the small size of Cyprus and the necessity for resettlement of large numbers

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of people, redistribution of land, and compensation for lost property would make execution and administration of such a scheme highly difficult. The seeming impossibility of dividing the island equitably and the resultant bitterness would be likely to cause as much resentment and strain on Greek-Turkish relations as would enosis.

(d) Guaranteed Independence or Trusteeship. Barring Makarios' views, the only recent indication of Cypriot opinion is the view of the Mayor of Nicosia, who now believes enosis is not practical and that some form of UN trusteeship under which the Cypriots would exercise local self-government and minority rights be guaranteed is the only practical interim solution, with future changes in the island's status to be settled by UN plebiscite. Both Greek and Turkish Cypriots apparently now share a desire to see British rule terminated. For its part, the US has come to doubt that either enosis or partition would prove to be peaceful or practical solutions and has discussed with the UK the possibility of independence for Cyprus coupled with treaty guarantees preventing enosis. The working out of any such solution would be gradual and involve a period of self-government in which the people of Cyprus could gain needed experience in running their own affairs.

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On the negative side: there is little if any evidence of Cypriot desire for independence; the island's economic potential might not sustain it without outside aid; and even firm guarantees might in time give way to renewed agitation for enosis. The latter would prove difficult for the Turks to accept. A similar plan has tentatively been put forth by NATO Secretary General Spaak, whose organization has now been allowed to interest itself in the problem. Initial Turkish reaction to Spaak's proposal has been highly negative and Ankara has so far not been willing to receive him for discussions. Nevertheless, some such formula appears the only peaceful possible way out of the dilemma. Its eventual acceptance, however, would depend on firm guidance to both the Turks and Greeks by outside powers, including the US, if the issue is to be moved off dead-center.

3. Probable Developments. The Turkish attitude toward the Cyprus question has hardened during recent months. At least as a tactical position, the Turks have insisted they would not accept any solution which does not include partition since they apparently fear the British may in desperation make a solution more favorable to the Greeks. In the event the British should ultimately decide to pull their forces out of the island in the absence of a settlement or turn the problem over to the UN, as was done with Palestine, the Turks as a last resort would probably land forces and seek to occupy

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the island. They have also threatened to reopen the Treaty of Lausanne, including the status of Thrace and the Aegean islands, if Greek objectives appear about to be realized. The fact that Prime Minister Menderes faces parliamentary elections this fall or winter has undoubtedly served to strengthen the Turkish Government's determination on the Cyprus issue. If Menderes wins out before Cyprus reaches a crisis stage, however, Turkey may feel more disposed to adopt a somewhat more flexible attitude. Any Turkish concessions, say in reluctantly approving guaranteed independence for the island, would almost certainly have to be based on the firmest guarantees, including that of the US, that such a solution would not eventually be overturned in favor of enosis.

4. The British are meanwhile reconsidering the island's strategic importance in the light of their new defense policy, including a possible shift of their main military emphasis in the area to the Persian Gulf-Aden-Horn of Africa region. Cabinet decisions affecting Cyprus, including a possible shift in Middle East Land Forces Headquarters away from the island, may be made shortly. While they have not lost interest in maintaining air bases on the island for possible use against the Soviet Bloc, UK thinking since Suez has tended to downgrade the importance of Cyprus as a position of strength from which to influence developments in the Middle Eastern states.

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Governor Harding has stated the view that British interests may not, therefore, require maintenance of sovereignty over the whole island. The British probably hope bases could be retained even if the island were partitioned between Greece and Turkey. One important consideration is the MacMillan Government's desire to see the issue settled before the Conservatives have to face Labor in a general election. The British Government would probably be more disposed to seriously consider pulling out and leaving the problem to the UN, or possibly imposing a partition with Turkish concurrence, if an election were approaching at home before the Cyprus issue had been settled. We do not believe that such a move is likely in the near future, and certainly not until Spak and possibly the UN have had another try at solving the problem. Although there are superficial similarities between Cyprus and Palestine, the factors of severe pressure for a quick settlement from important Western interests, including the US Government, and an existing mandatory status of the territory are not present in the case of Cyprus.

5. While not abandoning its basic desire for self-determination leading to enosis, the Greek Government now appears less intransigent on the issue. There are indications that Prime Minister Karamanlis, backed by King Paul, may be willing to settle for guaranteed independence, at least as an interim measure, in order to get rid of the issue. In the event of Karamanlis' replacement by a coalition government, Greek

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determination to force the issue would probably be even less strong. The Greeks will, of course, continue to talk loudly about Cyprus and are prepared to press the matter strongly in the next regular UN General Assembly session, which will convene in September, or possibly in an earlier special session on Hungary. The Greek Government will try to avoid a serious flare-up of Greek-Turkish tensions, although pride or popular feelings may cause trouble to break out unexpectedly. In the absence of a settlement the Greeks would probably seek to keep the issue alive, but take no real action pending a possible Labor victory in the UK in the belief that the present opposition would quickly make a settlement more in their favor. Archbishop Makarios will remain a Greek problem and barring an unlikely achievement of maximum Greek objectives, he will have to be persuaded to accept any solution eventually reached by the governments concerned.

6. There is no evidenced that a Cyprus settlement within the next year is likely. However, the British and Greeks have moderated their positions in recent months and Turkey's present intransigent stand appears tactical in nature. Moreover, the efforts of various outside elements -- NATO, the UN, and the US, which is showing greater

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interest in the problem than heretofore -- may contribute toward an agreed settlement. Such a possibility is highlighted by the apparent trend in British official thinking that the time ^{may have come} ~~has come~~ to rid the UK of a situation which has become an increasing domestic as well as an international liability. At the same time, we believe the UK would probably seek to salvage air bases and other military facilities for itself or NATO in the process of reaching any agreement on a new status for Cyprus.

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